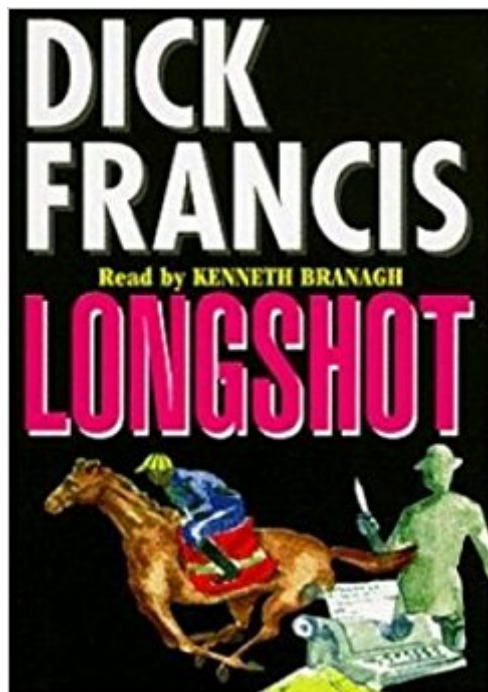


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# Longshot



## Synopsis

A classic mystery from Dick Francis, the champion of English storytellers. Life as a writer is colder, hungrier work than John Kendall had bargained for. Not even the survival guides he's written can help him. So when notorious racehorse trainer Tremayne Vickers approaches Kendall to write his biography, it's an offer the impoverished writer can't turn down. Moving into Vickers' country home, Kendall quickly becomes immersed in his host's lifestyle: riding racehorses, making friends, and getting to know the family. But then a local stable girl is found dead - and the party's over. A killer is lurking in the shadows. And Kendall's own survival tips are about to become more useful - and more deadly - than he could ever have imagined . . . Praise for Dick Francis: 'As a jockey, Dick Francis was unbeatable when he got into his stride. The same is true of his crime writing' Daily Mirror 'Dick Francis's fiction has a secret ingredient - his inimitable knack of grabbing the reader's attention on page one and holding it tight until the very end' Sunday Telegraph 'The narrative is brisk and gripping and the background researched with care . . . the entire story is a pleasure to relish' Scotsman 'Francis writing at his best' Evening Standard 'A regular winner . . . as smooth, swift and lean as ever' Sunday Express Dick Francis was one of the most successful post-war National Hunt jockeys. The winner of over 350 races, he was champion jockey in 1953/1954 and rode for HM Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, most famously on Devon Loch in the 1956 Grand National. On his retirement from the saddle, he published his autobiography, *The Sport of Queens*, before going on to write forty-three bestselling novels, a volume of short stories (*Field of 13*), and the biography of Lester Piggott. During his lifetime Dick Francis received many awards, amongst them the prestigious Crime Writers' Association's Cartier Diamond Dagger for his outstanding contribution to the genre, and three 'best novel' Edgar Allan Poe awards from The Mystery Writers of America. In 1996 he was named by them as Grand Master for a lifetime's achievement. In 1998 he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, and was awarded a CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List of 2000. Dick Francis died in February 2010, at the age of eighty-nine, but he remains one of the greatest thriller writers of all time. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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## Customer Reviews

The reliable Francis ( Straight ) delivers again, this time in a thriller featuring young author John Kendall. Kendall writes survival manuals for an adventure-travel agency, but has taken time off to pen a novel. When money runs thin, he agrees to write the biography of famed horse trainer Tremayne Vickers. Leaving London for Vickers's Berkshire home, Kendall arrives as one of Vickers's two principal riders is acquitted of murdering a young woman with whom he'd quarreled. However, members of Vickers's entourage, including sons Gareth and Perkin and Perkin's wife, Mackie, suggest the hot-tempered jockey had some part in the death. Kendall fits easily into the household, conducting research, taking notes, even cooking and working horses; then the body of a missing stablegirl is found in the woods. As Kendall's research continues, his riding skills improve and he is taken into Vickers's confidence, the intrepid writer finds himself under attack. Horses, danger, betrayal and doing the right thing--expected components of a vintage Francis yarn--permeate a plot presented with authority and verve. Paperback rights to Fawcett. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The narrative is brisk and gripping and the background researched with care . . . the entire story is a pleasure to relish \* Scotsman \* Dick Francis's fiction has a secret ingredient - his inimitable knack of grabbing the reader's attention on page one and holding it tight until the very end \* Sunday Telegraph \* Francis writing at his best \* Evening Standard \* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Longshot? Like all of Francis's books, the title has several meanings. One is the analysis of Tremayne, Kendall's biographical subject . .

. Tremayne seemed to have soared unharmed over such

psychological trifles as being rented out in Leicestershire as a harness and tack cleaner to a fox-hunting family and a year later as stableboy to a polo player in

Argentina. "But that was child abuse," I protested. Tremayne chuckled unconcernedly. "I didn't get buggered, if that's what you mean. My father hired me out, picked up all I earned and gave me a crack or two with his cane when I said it wasn't fair. Well, it wasn't fair. He told me that that was a valuable lesson, to learn that things weren't fair. Never expect fairness. I'm telling you what he told me, but you're lucky, I won't beat it into you. Tremayne is a solid, disciplined, successful businessman. With this unconventional, even severe childhood? What a longshot! This opinion is so . . . so . . .

counter-cultural!" "I've never beaten Perkin, nor Gareth. Couldn't. I remember what it felt like. But then, see, he did take me with him to Argentina and all round the world. I saw a lot of things most English boys don't. I missed a lot of school. He was mad, no doubt, but he gave me a priceless education, and I wouldn't change anything." "You had a pretty tough mind," I said. "Sure." He nodded. "You need it in this life. You might need it, I reflected, but tough minds weren't regulation issue. Many children would have disintegrated where Tremayne learned and thrived.

"A longshot that hit the mark! Another is Kendall, who aims to succeed writing fiction. A verbal confrontation with a famous author . . . "My agent says," I said neutrally, "that Long Way Home is really about the spiritual consequences of deprivation and fear." She said, "You are too young to write with authority of spiritual consequences. Too young for your soul to have been tempered. Too young to have learned the intensity of understanding that comes only through deep adversity." "Was that true? I wondered. How old was old enough? I said, "Shouldn't contentment be allowed its insights?" "It has none. Insight grows best on stony ground. Unless you have suffered or are poor or can tap into melancholy, you have defective perception." I rolled with that one. Sought for a response. "I am poor," I said. "Well, fairly. Poor enough to perceive that poverty is the enemy of moral strength." "You are a lightweight

person, "she said, "if you have no conception of the moral strength of redemption and atonement in penury. I swallowed. "I don't seek sainthood. I seek insight through a combination of imagination and common sense. "You are not a serious writer. A dire accusation; her worst. "I write to entertain," I said. "I," she said simply, "write to enlighten. I could find no possible answer. (Francis's self-revelation? Nevertheless, Francis's books do much more than entertain - they show courage and integrity in action! 'Spiritual consequences' indeed!) Successful writer? A longshot! Other connections are made. The villain is revealed as a longshot, the last one anyone suspected. The underlying message in this work (all Francis's books illustrate an ethic or principle) indicates his belief in human ability to overcome, conquer, succeed, in spite of adversity or failure. Circumstances do not create the person. We are self-made personalities, if we decide to aim for the longshot.

I really loved this book. Horse racing is so out of my normal arena but Francis gave me a great intro and laced it in a top drawer murder mystery. Had to work to keep from rushing through it too fast to catch all the lovely descriptions of early morning riding in the hills and snowy English countryside. Beautiful stuff. I immediately bought two more to try.

This was a great light read. I would definitely recommend this book and look forward to reading or listening to more of this author's books. I had never read any of his many books before but since introduced to this through a book club will look for more.

An intriguing murder mystery by one of my favorite writers!

"Longshot" by writer Ann Nocenti and artist Arthur Adams harkens back to a simpler time in the comic book marketplace. The series originally published as a six issue mini-series from September 1985 to February 1986 has been collected into a new trade paperback from Marvel Comics. Nocenti pitched the idea to an editor and the book was an immediate go. Now such a comic would need to be passed through committee after committee before seeing the light of day. The simpler publishing practice allowed for great creativity in a book that is a highlight in the early careers of Nocenti and

Adams and still maintains its charm and relevance. The story begins with Longshot on the run from demons in his own world when suddenly he "falls" through the sky into Upstate New York. His astounding luck prompts the people he meets to name him Longshot because he can't remember his own. Throughout the series Longshot bounces from place to place as the mood strikes him on a journey of self-discovery. Longshot is about innocence and his naivety and lack of cynicism puts him in more trouble than he expects. Listening to a conspiracy theorist, a movie stunt woman and a suicidal, down on his luck man generates the adventure the character seemingly craves. All the while Longshot yearns to know who he is. The principle of the series is stated by Nocenti in her original pitch for the series, "Who is Longshot? That's what he'd like to know!" The only characters that seem to be able to answer Longshot's questions are the various demons that are trying to kill him. What Longshot discovers is that he was created to be a humanoid slave to the spineless Mojo, the sinister looking jaundiced blob who gets around on a spider-legged cart. Longshot's creator, Arize, gave him free will in the hopes he would one day rise up and lead a rebellion against Mojo. Longshot doubts his purpose but is reassured when Arize tells him, "Existence precedes essence." It is a profound statement about the predetermination of life and it is something that Longshot struggles with. His ability to choose his own path is what gives Longshot the advantage over Mojo when the spineless one arrives on Earth. Through out the story the artwork keeps the tone of the innocent freedom fighter who follows the path in front of him without understanding the purpose. The penciled work is highly detailed with a style that was not prevalent in the comics of the day. This style is what has made Adams one of the most highly sought after artists in the comic book industry. The characters come across beautifully on the pages, most notably in Longshot. The lead's looks and ability to make women weak in the knees is a key component of the character and Adams captures this. The figures all have an animated flare which adds to the whimsy of the story. Where Adams really goes wild is in the designs of Mojo and the demons that are chasing Longshot. Mojo looks menacing even though he resembles a modestly molded slab of Play-Doh. The look of the ram-man, Quark, was one that excited Nocenti so much that when she saw it she created more for him to do. It is a look that conveys nobility but also captures the depressing nature of the character who works opposite of Longshot's happy go-lucky persona. Even the six-armed Spiral has a certain beauty that belies the torture she has received at the hands of Mojo. The design is unique and applicable to her crazy dancing that allows her to bend the walls of the universe. Her personality is even more interesting as she trades quips with Mojo that reveal her disdain for the amorphous blob while continuing her servitude to the vile creature. Adams is inked by two inkers who have gone on to long careers in comics. Whilce Portacio and Brent Anderson. Each one uses a minimalist

approach as their styles are almost indistinguishable from the other allowing Adams' original pencil work to come through on the page. The series is a nice package of great looking artwork and a solid story about an adventurous rebel who discovers his true calling and must decide to face his destiny. The series is entertaining as it allows the main character to take his journey of self-discovery in an irreverent manner. Cameo appearances by Spider-Man, She-Hulk and Doctor Strange set the series firmly in the Marvel Universe. Establishing the careers of Nocenti and Adams was not the only lasting effect of "Longshot." The character skyrocketed in popularity at the end of the 1980s when he was inducted into the X-Men in "Uncanny X-Men Annual" #10 (1986). The character was a member of the team when it was the highest selling comic book in the world. The villains from the series, Mojo and Spiral, have gone on to have big roles in the Marvel comics over the last couple of decades. Longshot has become a regular in the "X-Men" spin-off series "X-Factor."

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